

BALLET TODAY

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2/-



Action photograph by Frank Sharman

MOIRA SHEARER AND MICHAEL SOMES IN THE GRAND ADAGIO, "CINDERELLA", ACT 2

BALLET TODAY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET is very much in the news at present with its "smash hit" of a *Cinderella* which has aroused very similar scenes of enthusiasm as those which greeted the first performances of *Oklahoma*! Its success has astonished even those who had the highest hopes of it, but what no one has yet pointed out is that, had Frederick Ashton not risen so superbly to the occasion, English Ballet would have staggered under a blow from which it might not have recovered for years. The failure of a work on this scale could not have been hidden amongst the general repertoire. It *had* to be a success, and it was. Perhaps the most astounding thing of all about the production is that its actual rehearsal time was only about six weeks and that during the first three weeks *Don Juan* was also in rehearsal. It is only justice that Ashton should also be enjoying the success of his stage career as one of the Ugly Sisters so that at the end of each performance he can receive the tribute due to him both as choreographer and dancer-mime. At the time I write this everyone is looking forward eagerly to Fonteyn's first appearance as *Cinderella*. It will be particularly interesting to watch her for once in a major role in a modern ballet which another dancer has created, even though this situation arose out of so unhappy an accident. Fonteyn has had more than her fair share of troubles during the past few months and everyone will be wishing her the most wonderful good fortune in the future.

The visit to America in October will be the biggest yet Sadler's Wells have yet had to face. Up to now they have almost invariably toured in countries where there is no important national ballet, and though their success has always been undoubted, it is not at all the same thing as appearing before audiences who are experienced ballet goers. Their fortnight in Paris last year was by no means an unqualified success and New York may be just as tough a nut to crack. It does seem very probable that the years of balletic isolation due to the war have produced audiences here, in Paris and in

New York who are no longer flexible in their views and who can appreciate only the kind of ballets and the type of dancer to which they are accustomed. If we find much to criticise in the French and American styles, we must expect similar criticism when our dancers face a foreign audience. What will certainly strike the Americans is the *completeness* of our productions and the clarity of *ensemble* movements.

Having strong feelings myself about the "alternative cast" system at Covent Garden, I was yet surprised to find these feelings shared by so many readers. Sorting out their comments I can summarise by saying that, while they all welcome the opportunity of watching the performance-to-performance progress of young artists like Grey, Shearer and Elvin in the classical roles, they deeply resent the fact that their appearances should so often be the signal for all kinds of peculiar casting to be tried out at the same time, when what these dancers need, and should be given, is the strongest possible backing. If it were a question of paying less on these nights no one in the audience would have cause to complain, but considering the price of seats and the bad line of sight of so many of them, it simply is not good enough.

Provincial audiences have another grumble—that they never now see Sadler's Wells, though it was the provinces which kept them alive in the early days of the war and indeed made them royally welcome during all those years. There is as yet no news of any provincial tour this year. Kathrine Sorley Walker writes on the general subject of Ballet in the Provinces in the present issue.

P.W.M.

PETER REVITT'S BALLET GUYED (NO. 7.)



ALICIA MARKOVA IN "GISELLE", ACT 2

THE WINTER SEASON AT COVENT GARDEN

By MARY CLARKE

DECEMBER 23rd, 1948, is a date that will live as long as English Ballet or records of English Ballet survive. It marked the first performance at Covent Garden of the very first three-act ballet ever to be created by an Englishman and—more important than the attempt—the ballet's complete success.

Inevitably one compares *Cinderella* with the only other three-acters that are known in this country today—with the heterogeneous heroics of *Chota Roustaveli* and with the English productions of the Tchaikovsky ballets. It is from the Petipa/Ivanov constructions of the latter that *Cinderella* is descended but it cannot be too strongly emphasised that Ashton has approached the creation of

the ballet in his own right as an experienced and mature choreographer of tremendous individuality and not merely as a *pasticheur*. He has not had a completely free hand since the use of Prokofiev's music prescribes the progression of the plot (and probably strengthens the link with Petipa), while the actual choice of story involves him with another tradition even stronger than that of the classical ballet—the English Pantomime.

The whole "fairy tale" character of the ballet comes straight from Perrault and is worked out in enchantingly varied choreography that not only has beauty and invention but more positive character and meaning than Ashton usually achieves. The four *solis* for the

A FIRST-NIGHT PHOTOGRAPH OF MARGOT FONTEYN IN "DON JUAN"

Action photograph by Frank Sharman



asons genuinely suggest their different characteristics through the choreography and if they were danced in practice dress without any of their trappings it would still be possible to identify them. In this respect the divergence from the Petipa school is most apparent. Ashton uses a similar basic construction of a slowly progressing story, but he manages to make the ballerina's *oli* and the *pas de deux* emerge naturally from the situations and become in themselves expressive and not merely formal and academic *adages*. Cinderella undergoes experiences no more moving than do Odette or Aurora yet she is far more of a person than either of them.

The actual staging, too, is worthy of the theatre in which it is presented and the transformation scenes are a great improvement on those devised for *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1946. The choreography for the *ensemble* dances at the ball and for the Stars is infinitely more varied and contrapuntal than that which Petipa devised for his *corps de ballet* which was so often regimental in action and was abandoned in straight lines in the background as soon as the ballerina set foot on the stage.

In fact one may say that Ashton has taken a good look at the Petipa ballets, removed the lifeless conventions and utilised in his own magical way the elements which have enduring value. There is no inexplicable mime, no formal *pas de deux* (of the *Adage*, *variation 1*, *Variation 2*, *Coda* school) and, thank heaven, no Wedding Celebrations.

That tradition, then, has been used to its utmost effect. The other tradition, of English Pantomime, is incarnate, albeit a little incongruously, in the persons of the Ugly Sisters. In any country but England the sisters could have been danced by women, really danced, been spiritually ugly and malevolent rather than grotesque and generally pointed the moral in the way that Perrault intended. But in England, and particularly at Christmas time, there is one way and one way only to play an Ugly Sister and that is as first cousin to a pantomime dame. Ashton has remembered that they are in a ballet and has built their humour as far as possible on a dancing basis—such as their valiant and fantastic attempts to learn a gavotte—but pantomime creeps through and, in the more loosely composed passages in the first act, undoubtedly gets the upper hand.

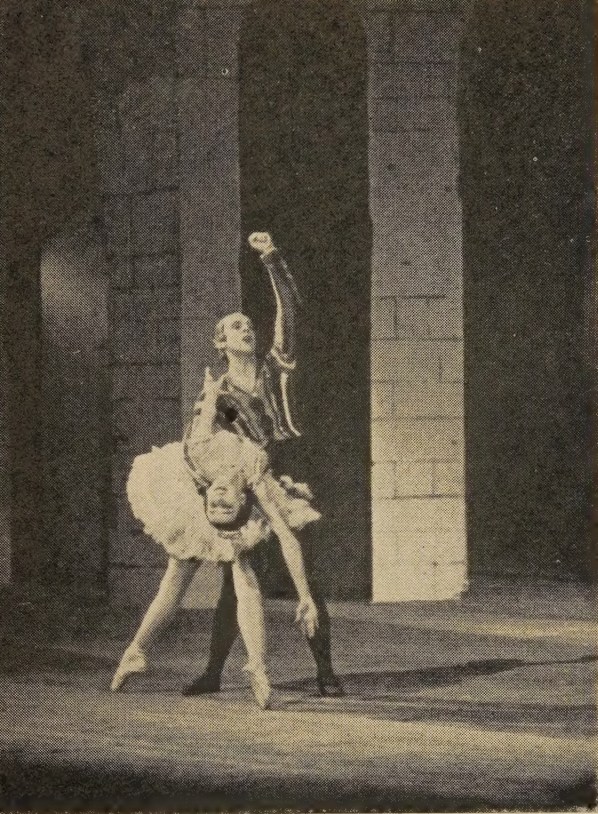
At the time of writing it is impossible to say whether the presence of a prima ballerina as Cinderella will restore the balletic balance in this act and indeed throughout the ballet. Certainly the whole work would benefit from a stronger central personality such as Fonteyn should, and undoubtedly will, give it.

Ashton suffered initial disappointment in having to create the ballet without Fonteyn for whom it was conceived but he has been lucky in her successors. Moira Shearer is the perfect fairy princess and her

dancing has a new freedom and swiftness which are the best possible proof that she has not been neglecting ballet for films. Her *pas de deux* at the ball (and it is one of Ashton's very loveliest) is perhaps her peak moment. She dances both beautifully and with feeling. Violetta Elvin, as beautiful physically as Shearer, gives a different and, to me, more moving performance. She is heartbreakingly tender in the first act when she tremblingly reaches up to place the lighted candle beneath her mother's portrait and she makes the little solo with the broom both whimsical and sad. She has all the radiance of a young girl at her first ball and yet the poise of a ballerina—although she still needs time in which to become thoroughly at home in the choreography. But she has that pre-eminent quality of holding one's attention no matter what wonderful happenings are taking place all around her.

The Ugly Sisters of Ashton and Helpmann have been nightly receiving far more adulation from rapturous audiences than I can hope to give them. Every theatre manager in London must be queueing up to offer Helpmann £1,000 a week to play the Dame in one of next year's pantomimes and he would be worth every penny of it. Does the fact that one mentally fits words to his exclamatory gestures indicate too close a kinship with the dramatic than the ballet stage? Perhaps so, but he is wildly, uproariously funny. Ashton's cowering and timorous elder sister, continually and hopelessly robbed of the biggest men and the biggest oranges by her rapacious junior, is such a perfect study in repression that by the end one is as inconsolable as she is that the slipper will not go on.

Michael Somes in pale blue must be almost everybody's idea of Prince Charming but I found John Hart miscast and unconvincing. Pamela May is all graciousness as the Good Fairy and is perfectly supported in the first act by Violetta Elvin in the languorous Summer variation and by Beryl Grey's magnificence as Winter. Two young dancers who show up with tremendous promise are Nadia Nerina as Spring and Kenneth Macmillan as a Cavalier, while Alexander Grant's whimsicality makes something positive and endearing of the Jester. But the whole company dances well and looks uncommonly glamorous. For this we must thank M. Jean-Denis Malclès who has designed the best settings and costumes on such a scale that have been seen at Covent Garden since it reopened. He is a truly romantic artist and mixes the softest of colours to obtain the warm glowing pictures which Ashton so skilfully animates. His sets are simple and his costumes complex, which is just as it should be, and his coach for the ball and magic ship for the apotheosis are pure fairyland. I would award him a special palm for *not* dressing the Good Fairy in white (he was obviously not brought up on English pantomimes) and another for allowing Helpmann his elastic stockings.



Action photograph by Frank Sharman

MARGOT FONTEYN AND ROBERT HELPMANN IN "DON JUAN"

The success of *Cinderella* was all the more welcome and stimulating because the winter season had started off so badly. Apart from the inevitable gloom cast by Fonteyn's accident and subsequent absence, the company seemed all to pieces on the opening night and "conductor trouble" did not improve matters. I saw Beryl Grey dance a *Swan Lake* early in the season hampered by hopelessly erratic *tempi* in the orchestra pit and surrounded by a company that looked half asleep. Even these handicaps, however, could not hide the fact that she is dancing better than ever before. She has an admirable new make-up and has restrained the emotion of her second act so that she now has something left for the fourth.

I find it difficult to write about Ashton's *Don Juan* because I cannot believe that we have yet seen it in the form that he envisaged. Indeed I came away from the first performance quoting Byron's opening line: "I want a hero". The ballet has a good set, some good costumes and two quite ravishing *pas de deux* but is disjointed and has moments of sheer bathos. Despite the lovely performances given by Fonteyn or Elvin, as La Morte Amoureuse, and by Shearer as the young married woman, the ballet cries aloud for a dominating Don Juan to hold it all together. In this respect I found Helpmann completely ineffective and his technical limitations have patently dictated the luke-warm composition of his part. If a dancer with the fire of a Lichinev or a Babilée ever emerges at Sadler's Wells then perhaps we shall see the ballet convincingly performed.

"THUS TO RUMINATE—"

By ALAN STOREY

PART II

*When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age . . .*

IN spite of his elaborate praise, Faure was not wholly uncritical of Isadora. His recognition of her immense power to liberate and to animate the creative spirit in others did not preclude an equal awareness of her imperfections. "I came—quickly enough—," he confessed, "to find that art didactic, wholly cultural, expressing only an interior life subtly set forth. It showed more knowledge than genius, more will than rapture, and less living harmonies than 'plastic equivalences'." Faure was well aware that it is difficult to live on familiar terms with the monumental in either art or nature, and that to love it is impossible since the awareness of sublimity and awe which it primarily inspires is replaced all too soon by a feeling of inhuman oppression. Small wonder then that "the slightest Spanish dancer, thin, nervous, black as a dried olive," contained for

him "more spiritual flame in her convulsive little finger than ever had that great body, sculptural as ever female body could be". The truth is that Isadora was an outstanding example of "the grasp which is exceeded by the reach". Her peculiar divinity was flawed by a mirthless presumption, by an egoism entirely lacking in critical discrimination. Mme. Karsavina in her analysis of Isadora refers to "the sentimentality of the New Englander, so incompatible with the role of a revolutionary"; and it was precisely this sentimentality which drove Isadora to her worst excesses as a dancer and as a human being. She strove like Whitman before her, and, to some extent, Saroyan since, to be large, to contain multitudes. Thus—and it is as if one were to sweep an entire river to find a missing ring—she hoped to attain a revelation of transcendent reality through

medium of an imperfectly defined and wholly eclectic aestheticism, yet succeeded only in discovering a series of bleak abstractions. Fundamentally her attitude scarcely differed from that of the traditional American tourist ardently "catching up on" European culture, which is especially noticeable in its disproportionate sense of values. No longer endangered by the imminence of her enthralling personality, I marvel at the incongruous nature of her recitals; not so much the audacious seizure of music far removed from the dance (for one's delicacy in such matters has almost decayed in recent years) as at the ineffectual use she made of it. In her pursuit of the indeterminate "soul", Beethoven symphony or a Chopin waltz became as one, without distinction. For music was far less important to Isadora than the mood it evoked, the mood around which the dance could twine for sustenance and support until it became, in Isadora's own words, "something so big and so beautiful that the beholder says to himself, 'see before me the movements of the soul, the soul of an opening flower'." But in spite of Mr. Martin's persuasive essay*, I do not believe this ever occurred, nor if by "soul" Isadora meant (as I imagine she did) the Platonic "reality far from which we live, and from which we become more and more separated as the conventional knowledge which we have substituted for it grows in density and impermeability . . ." then she failed. The basis of this failure rests in her innermost being, in her inability to dissociate her own individuality from the object of interpretation. Whatever she danced she never ceased to be an Isadora restlessly seeking self-revelation. Possibly this search provided the motive in her choice of a career as a dancer; most certainly it prompted her, nagged at her elbow, in the astonishing experiments which she carried out in the playing of internal nervous experience described by Mr. Martin. Yet the dominant fact remains that it was never concluded. Isadora did not, as D. H. Lawrence puts it, "come through" and, consequently, she found it impossible to penetrate, as she so desperately desired, to enter the worlds of reality which lay beyond, and of whose existence she sometimes made one so richly aware.

It is possible to be too self-conscious an artist and to make the acts of selection and exclusion with too much liberation. The great innovators deeply concerned with the actual fabric of their invention are curiously the worst offenders because they are endeavouring to express themselves in a new and untried language. Beethoven and Mallarmé (incongruous pair) are examples; the choice they make is so palpably apparent that one is almost forced to see or hear the abandoned alternatives. At more extreme examples are naturally to be found in contemporary art, in the novels of Henry Green

for instance, or the ballets of Antony Tudor. Experiment indeed is so often applauded for its own sake that one wonders if spontaneity of expression within established technical forms is not too unjustly considered. Pavlova's is a case in point. It is possible still to find those who affect to despise her work and her attitude towards it on the grounds that she debased her standards in abandoning Diaghilev's and by pandering to public sentimentality in meretricious showpieces. How wrong they are! And how sadly they misjudge the being that was Pavlova. Mr. Beaumont has written somewhere: "She made no attempt to increase the vocabulary of the dance; she found it sufficient and devoted all her energies to learning to speak the language to perfection". "She found it sufficient . . ." how true—and how wonderfully it sums her up. The overweening ambitions and searchings of Isadora meant nothing to Pavlova, though in her generous way she expressed a great admiration for the American dancer; Diaghilev's visionary destruction of accepted aesthetic principles meant even less. Not that she was a reactionary—she made no attempt to fight rearguard actions, for the simple if seemingly incredible reason that she saw nothing to which she should react. These things existed, and for a short time she was willing even to assist in establishing them; but because they then seemed relatively unimportant to her she dropped out and continued on her own way. Levinson's comparison of Pavlova to Taglioni was not arbitrarily confined to certain vague similarities of style and poetical feeling, particularly in their most famous roles. He also realised that they held an almost identical position in the history of ballet. Both were the instruments used to inaugurate a new era of ballet and both remained indifferent to its future development, content to use the immediate advantages of a newly won freedom without any desire to extend it.

Apart from her brief appearance with the *Ballets Russes* Pavlova confined herself to the world of Fokine's *Le Cygne* and *Eunice*. But there, like a child in an attic stuffed with discarded ecstasies (the tarnished brocade, the empty scabbard and the solemn topper), she discovered truths and realities which tumbled reason in the haybeds of the heart and brought death and life, suffering and joy, wholly realised in their oneness, to a million eyes. Hers was the innocent eye, the eye of childhood that creates what it accepts. It was not the conscious effort to return to the vision of youth noticeable in the work of such present-day writers as Day Lewis or Denton Welch, that one found in her art, nor the melting away of temporal barriers achieved by Proust in *Temps Retrouvé*. Pavlova, without the need of Barrie's whimsy and anxious make-believe to sustain her, never grew up. The tantrums and rages for which she was so notorious were those of a thwarted child; even the rigid discipline and guarded suspicion ex-

*Ijinsky, Pavlova, Isadora Duncan. Three monographs edited by Paul Magriel. (A. & C. Black Ltd., each 12s. 6d. net.)

perienced by members of her troupe were oddly reminiscent of the schoolgirl leader of a secret society concerned only with the preservation of its ideals. To understand this one need read no further than the section in Mr. Magriel's monograph on Pavlova containing her *Pages of My Life*. Dancers as a group are usually considered to be illiterate—with some justification; but there are exceptions—notably Karsavina—and Pavlova is undoubtedly one of them. Her reminiscences are moving in their naïve directness; they are permeated by a simple egoism which reduces each single event and personality to the sight-level of one who cannot imagine the existence of a world without herself as its hub. They would in fact appear to be written by a child conscious of certain carefully instilled principles of composition, but who still allows each sentence the dignity of a paragraph. All these qualities appear in her description of her first visit to the ballet. "How would you like to dance thus?" asked my mother with a smile. "Oh," I replied, "I should prefer to dance as the pretty lady does who plays the part of the Princess. One day I shall be the Princess, and dance upon the stage of this very theatre." She might as easily have said, "One day I shall be an engine driver and drive this very train", but, unlike other children, Anna Pavlova remained fixed, immutable in her desire. Recognising her obduracy, her mother told her that to achieve this ambition she must leave home and become a pupil of the Ballet School. Pavlova's reply is typical. "I have no wish to leave you, Mamma dear. But if it is necessary for me to part with you in order to become a Ballerina, I shall have to resign myself to it." Even more astonishing are her remarks on leaving the school. "I left the Ballet School at the age of sixteen; and shortly afterward I was permitted to style myself *Première Danseuse* . . . Later I was granted the title of Ballerina, which only four other dancers of the present time have received." For my own part I think that few things have been said or written comparable to this since Jeanne d'Arc's reply to the tribunal; but then she and Pavlova had so many qualities in common—simplicity, a matter-of-fact acceptance of outside forces, singleness of mind.

Pavlova's metamorphosis in *Le Cygne* was reflected in her other parts, with a varying degree of success. The choreographies of her ballets and solos were often cheaply contrived; hack arrangements of outworn academic clichés which would have been intolerable if danced by anyone else. But one did not notice the choreography when Pavlova appeared. The strained smiles of her *corps de ballet*, the puppydog eagerness of her partner disappeared; and the void between artist and audience closed perceptibly until the two united in a single understanding. This *rapprochement* inevitably contained sorrows unbearable to the sensitive onlooker; it was impossible for instance not to detect the slightest strain

and weariness in that delicate figure, and there were moments—in her latter years especially—when it seemed as if the rigidity of bone refused at last to support its spirit a moment longer, and she stumbled. One felt then, not the usual shock or concern attendant upon such accidents, but a deadness, a sense of hopelessness even, as if part of one's life had suddenly been extinguished. Markova, alone of all dancers today, inheriting something of her frailty; a frailty which appeared to resist the air besieging it, as the last tenuous leaves of autumn hold bravely to the indifferent twig, until they too relinquish themselves to mortality. Pavlova, unknowing, succeeded where Isadora failed. She held a world within herself, but it was her own fully realised spirit which imbued it with life. She was, to me, the most sentient of living creatures.

Had I but World enough, and Time, I might possibly use my imaginings to recreate the splendours of Nijinsky. A certain regard for honesty, however, obliges me to admit that I never saw him dance. And here I suspect that I join forces with the intolerant to whom Mr. Magriel directs his slim volumes as a necessary douché for complacency. Unfortunately his *Nijinsky* happens to be the least satisfactory of the three. No doubt the

Photograph from
the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection

"Scheherazade."



reason for this is geographical rather than critical, since they have all been compiled from an American viewpoint. Nijinsky visited America once, in 1916—that is to say, at the most critical moment in the existence of Diaghilev's Company. Nijinsky himself was almost at the end of his career and his greatest achievements as both dancer and choreographer lay behind him. The Magriel book in consequence is almost wholly devoted to the one aspect of Nijinsky's work unknown to Europeans, the creation and performance of his last ballet *Til Eulenspiegel*. Was this really a great ballet? American observers, at least, appear to think so; one of them, Mr. H. T. Parker, writes, "It is the handiwork of an intellect, invention, and fancy that shows Mr. Nijinsky more than the master dancer of his time; that offers a new and fruitful field to mimodrama". Here at any rate is a clear example of denied access to the material achievements and failures which I referred to earlier. But if we may only speculate on this point, the essay on *Nijinsky and Til Eulenspiegel* by the artist Robert Edmond Jones places us on more substantial ground. It is a brilliant account of Nijinsky's creative methods supplementing and substantiating the more well-known descriptions by Mme. Sokolova and others. Nijinsky's sanity will, I suppose, be discussed for as long as ballet exists, but not being qualified in any way myself I feel reluctant to add to theory. Nevertheless I cannot help pointing out that the Nijinsky of the Diary is extremely close to the Nijinsky engrossed in creation. His failure as a choreographer, on the evidence remaining to us, is directly opposed to that of Isadora Duncan. She strove to contain multitudes and could not, he held them but knew no way to release them. Had he worked in other mediums, in words or paint, the frustration might easily have been avoided; as it was he was unable to communicate his wishes to others, not even through the medium of his own body. The only real solution would have been to dance each part himself, and it may have been a subconscious attempt to do this which led to the final disintegration. For such scenes as those described by Jones could not be sustained

indefinitely . . . "He lashes out at me with an insensate blind hate. It is a nightmare set in a blast furnace . . . the entire ensemble stare at me silently with black hatred in their faces . . . Shoes are wrenched from the feet of the *coryphées*, necklaces are torn from their throats and shattered into fragments against the walls. Unbelievable insults are hurled at me. It is like taking the lid off hell."

The contrast between Nijinsky the creator and Nijinsky the interpretative artist is almost unbelievable. In the roles built for him by Fokine—Petrouchka, the Golden Slave, and Harlequin—he was at rest, his individuality unbroken. He could in these parts, like Pavlova, push out his *bateau ivre* into the unknown worlds of reality; visiting them not once but many times, and always from a new direction. "To fully appreciate his genius", as Carl Van Vechten wrote in 1916, "it is necessary not only to see him in a variety of parts, but also to see him in the same role many times." So much has been written about his dancing that it is difficult now to avoid hyperbole. But to conclude this essay I think it fitting to allow Mr. Van Vechten to have the last word in his tribute not only to Nijinsky but, in its deeper implications, to Pavlova and Duncan. "No writer, no musician, no painter, can feel deep emotion before a work of art without expressing it in some way, although the expression may be a thousand leagues removed from the inspiration. And how few of us can view the art of Nijinsky without emotion! To the painter he gives a new sense of proportion, to the musician a new sense of rhythm, while to the writer he must perforce immediately suggest new words; better still, new meanings for old words. Dance, pantomime, acting, harmony, all these divest themselves of their worn-out accoutrements and appear, as if clothed by magic, in garments of unheard-of novelty; hue, texture, cut, and workmanship are all a surprise to us. We look enraptured, we go away enthralled, and perhaps even unconsciously a new quality creeps into our own work."

BALLETS GLACÉS

By L. GORDON SMITH

WINTER is here—a season in which the thoughts of sportsmen turn to skating and those of balletomanes, as at any other time, to ballet. Probably both factions believe that they are possessed of the best of both worlds; but odious as are comparisons, there seems to be little room for doubt that *Les Patineurs* shows the balletomane more about skating than "Ice Revue", exciting as it can be, shows the skater about ballet.

Most ballet-lovers will agree that *Les Patineurs* is a gem. There are very few who do not like it, although there are some who are so clever that they need to find excuses for doing so!

The audience is consoled for the drabness of the wintry weather outside by the jollity of the winter on the stage. Here are people *enjoying* the weather! They are happy; they do not care if it snows! They do not care (nor do we) if the stage-hand goes mad and sends

down snow in Large Lumps. The dancers twirl and weave and play, and we are grateful for the sight of so much youth and charm and joyous energy.

But not all skating ballets have had so happy an atmosphere.

On January 22nd, 1922, Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois presented *Skating Rink* at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, Paris. This one act ballet, with book by Riciotto Canudo, choreography by Jean Borlin to music by Arthur Honegger and décor by Fernand Léger, owed its inspiration to Borlin's and Canudo's visits to the Apache Halls of Paris. The scenery was extremely futuristic, consisting of patterns of rectangles and circles and the costumes, simple in shape, were geometrically decorated.

In addition to the *corps de ballet*, there were three characters: The Madman, danced by Jean Borlin, The Woman (Yolanda Figoni) and The Man (Kaj Smith).

The curtain rose on a stage filled with a leisurely procession of gliding skaters, a cosmopolitan collection of workmen, factory girls and men and women of fashion—a whirling representation of life. From the mass of figures emerged a Man and a Woman, irresistibly drawn together by the forces of destiny, as in mime and dance they expressed their desire for each other.

The Woman's lover (The Madman) appeared and tried to recapture her attention, but again and again he was swept away by the whirlwind of skaters, and at last the newcomer carried off the Woman, consenting, yet torn with anguish. The skaters continued to revolve, with complete indifference to the drama which had been enacted among them.

Surely a somewhat chilling ballet to see on a January evening!

The weather was very different on Thursday, 10th July, 1849; it was, in fact, in the middle of a heat wave that *Les Plaisirs de l'Hiver ou les Patineurs* was presented at Her Majesty's Theatre. The book and choreography were by Paul Taglioni (brother of Marie Taglioni, "La Sylphide") and the music by Cesare Pugni, whose ballet music was very popular at that time.

The inappropriate weather made the ballet the more welcome, as the audience was thankful to find in this wintry spectacle a cool refuge from the heat of the London streets.

Carolina Rosati, a great favourite with London ballet-lovers, danced the leading part in this ballet-divertissement of one act and two scenes, which, we are told, began with the celebration of "a Polish Wedding" (for which Mlle. Rosati and the rest of the cast were mysteriously dressed in Hungarian costumes!) amid the flowers of a Winter Garden.

The second scene took place on a frozen lake, and, among other attractions, "real roller skates" were used



From the Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection

THE BRANDARD LITHOGRAPH OF "LES PLAISIRS DE L'HIVER"

for the first (and, one would hope, the last!) time in a ballet. Why roller skates on a "frozen lake" would seem to be a matter for conjecture, but it appears that they were really replicas of ice-skates mounted on concealed wheels and that it was a matter for great pride that the mechanism was completely imperceptible! M. Pugni's music, too, was said to "imitate the sound of gliding", so presumably it drowned the noise of the wheels!

Included in the ballet were a *Pas des Trileux*, and a *Pas de Hussarde* of which a contemporary lithograph portrays an enchanting Rosati tripping a coy measure with M. Charles Venafrà, dressed as a Military Gentleman, with very large shoulders and very small feet. The ballet ended with a *Grand Quadrille des Patineurs*, which received much favourable comment and was considered quite ingenious and very intricate and pretty.

These glimpses of the skating ballets of the past, fascinating though they are, contain nothing to make us the less content with our own *Les Patineurs*, still beloved after twelve years. For it was in the winter, on the 16th February, 1937, at Sadler's Wells Theatre, that the public first saw William Chappell's delightful scenery and costumes and listened to Constant Lambert's skilful arrangement of the four numbers from Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* and another four from *L'Etoile du Nord* which make so perfect a setting for Frederick Ashton's clever and charming choreography in *Les Patineurs*.

THE PAST YEAR IN SOVIET BALLET

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

MANY spectacular performances graced the past year in Russia, but hardly any could equal the and revival of *La Bayadère* in Leningrad. While *La Bayadère* belongs to ballet history—one of the most successful creations of Marius Petipa, it was composed in 1877—it will remain a classic for ever because of the poetic “Shades” scene in the third act.

Nothing could be simpler than the movements which Petipa chose for the scene; first *arabesque*, arms *en haut*, but repeated uninterruptedly by a diagonal line of the *corps de ballet* emerging from the dimly lit elevated depth of the stage, it affords a symphonic fusion with the music, producing a great aesthetic delight.

Only a company possessing a first-class *corps de ballet* in which every member could easily be soloist in a smaller theatre, is capable of coping with *La Bayadère*. And such, despite the great war-hardships which it has endured, is the Kirov Theatre company.

In the other scenes of *La Bayadère* the *corps de ballet* so has to produce a background and atmosphere, without which revival of the ballet would have been impossible. The music, by Minkus, could not be even compared to that of *Swan Lake*—almost its contemporary. The importance of the ballet lies in the bouquet of dances composed by Petipa in his prime. In the *grand pas* one sees how a suite of dances was done by Petipa—he would start with simpler and less striking ones and gradually lead to brilliant variations.

Uday Shankar, who has just passed through Moscow on a fleeting visit, would probably have been shocked by the “Indian” theme dances of the ballet. In the late eighties, when the “book” of the ballet was being written by Khudekov, prominent balletomane, St. Petersburg publisher, and author of the four-volume “History of the Dance”, stories of adventure set in exotic countries were very popular. By placing his ballet in the distant and little known India, Khudekov was answering a popular romantic demand. Yet Petipa laboriously studied whatever Indian material he could find, and some of the character dances, such as the frenzied Hindu dance, have some definite relation to the true national movements.

Otherwise *La Bayadère* was always a ballet in classical idiom, and has served as a testing ground for many great ballerinas, beginning with Ekaterina Vazem, for whose benefit performance it was first given.

The ballet affords several great roles to exploit. The

title role of Nikia the temple dancer is for a classical ballerina *par excellence*. Marina Semyonova was the best Nikia in Soviet ballet. In the *allegro* of the second act she was the first to perform that part of Nikia’s dance *sur les pointes*. It should be realised that when Petipa composed the ballet the toe of the ballet shoe was not half as hard as it is now, and dancing *sur les pointes* was more of a feat. Semyonova was the first to realise that it was time to break with what had become an unnecessary tradition in *La Bayadère* and the dance has since been danced *sur les pointes* by all the ballerinas who have had the part.

The present Leningrad revival is being danced by Natalia Dudinskaya. She has attained depths heretofore unknown in her repertoire. Vaganova’s pet disciple, she is a real classical ballerina, and has achieved an insuperable mastery of the entire arsenal of classical ballet.

La Bayadère is conducted by her as a violin concerto. Her aerial lightness, accompanied by great force, her clear style and slight coldness suit the part of the virgin temple dancer, and a moving effect is produced by means of great school.

In the “Kingdom of Shades” scene she lacks that eeriness which belongs to Ulanova. She is a dancer and dances for the sake of dance and does not resort to emotion as the keynote in her impersonation. Vaganova told that Dudinskaya once said to her: “How would I live had there been no dancing?”

When Chabukiani appeared twice in *La Bayadère* to crown the brilliant season, together with Dudinskaya they formed a duet such as can rarely be seen.

La Bayadère is now performed without the stupendous last act with its destruction of the temple. Roller, chief machinist of the Imperial Theatres, was the one who really excelled in this scene. The machinery no longer exists and the taste for such effects has been lost, so the ballet is no worse for the omission and ends with the “Kingdom of Shades” scene, wherein Solor, the Indian warrior, grieving for his beloved Nikia, treacherously poisoned on the orders of the Rajah’s daughter, her rival, sees apparitions of Nikia and other maidens dancing in a cloudy mist.

In some seventy years of existence *La Bayadère* underwent some changes and interpolations, introduced by individual dancers. Some of them, such as the many variations composed by Chabukiani for himself, have

stayed. The only objection in the present revival was caused by the introduction of a *pas de deux* for Nikia and a young slave. Its modern "lifts" offended the eye and disturbed the classical pattern.

On the other hand the new interpolated dance of the "Golden God", danced and composed by Nicolai Zubkovsky, a unique dancer with a tremendous *ballon* and no visible preparation, was a great success and blended perfectly with the composition of the first act. Zubkovsky's dance is full of difficult leaps and turns in which he excels, always trying to invent new movements unavailable in the classical vocabulary. Zubkovsky's real domain is comic and grotesque dance. He is not so interesting in the traditional classical repertoire though he has danced it all. Ballets should be composed specially for him, as the production of *False Bridegroom* (after Goldoni's *Il servitore di due padroni*) has already proved. As a dancer he is most often compared with Duport, whom he is said to resemble in every respect.

Many other excellent artists appear in the revival of *La Bayadère* such as Mikhailov, the Brahmin Priest, enamoured of Nikia, Nonna Yastrebova—a very beautiful Gamsatti, Solor's bride, Shavrovaydaveya, the fakir. There was also a very sweet and promising debutante in the person of Tania Legat, Nicolai Legat's granddaughter (child of his daughter Maria). Not more than twelve years old, she is probably the most promising pupil of the Leningrad school. She appeared in the *divertissement* of the second act of *La Bayadère* in the "manu" dance, which is a solo done by a dancer balancing a pitcher on the top of her head and accompanied by two children, who pretend to be picking up the pitcher, when it is about to fall. The "manu" dance was once in the repertoire of Sophia Fedorova. Tania Legat has an engaging smile and personality and inborn grace. She also danced the main part in a school ballet *The Dragon-fly*, in the same season.

Bayaderka, as it is called in Russian, overshadowed even the new production of *Raymonda* by Konstantin Sergeyev. Another highlight of the Leningrad season was the special performance of the *Fountain of Bakhchiserai* in honour of the twentieth jubilee of the stage career of Galina Ulanova and Tatiana Vecheclova. Graduates of the same class, they performed the parts of Maria and Zarema, the two conflicting characters, at the jubilee performance.

Militza, the new Yugoslav ballet by Vassily Vainonen, music by Asafiev, seemed most successful in the rehearsal hall but underwent an unfortunate transformation when it was transferred to the stage. It did not meet with great success, though some of the dances, particularly character ones—Vainonen's true realm—were quite interesting. A much more successful version was produced for the Molotov Opera and Ballet Theatre by Anatoly Shatin, a Moscow choreographer who seemed

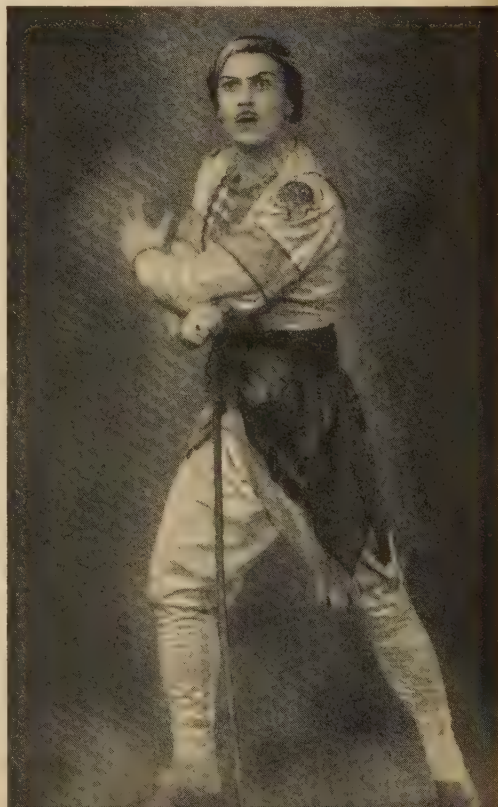
to have reached a better understanding of the late Golubov's original "book", but unfortunately Molotov (formerly Perm) is too far for an overnight trip as one goes to Leningrad to see a ballet.

The Moscow season also had a very interesting revival—*The Hump-Backed Horse* or *Koniok Gorbunok*. This ballet is really a long *divertissement* arranged in 1861 by Saint-Léon, who was not much of an authority on Russian folk-lore. Into this purely Russian ballet he managed to work in part of the overture from Rossini's *Tancred*, while the mazurka of the last act was composed to the tune of a Russian children's song "Granny had a little goat".

Since it was produced in 1864 the ballet has been completely revised on two occasions—in 1895 by Petipa and in 1912 by Gorski. The dances closest to the original Saint-Léon are those of the first act, part of the second act in the Khan's harem (particularly the eunuch's pantomime) and almost all the character dances. The classical dances, such as those of the Frescoes which are brought to life by the magic whip given to Ivan-the-Fool by the Hump-Backed Horse, bear the indelible mark of Petipa.

One of the ballerina's main solo dances is Tchaikovsky's Russian dance known as "Melancholia", com-

CHABUKIANI IN "LA BAYADERE"



sed for the *Swan Lake* version of 1877. It is believed that this dance was not staged by the ill-famed Reisinger who did not know Russian Folk dance idiom. At any rate it is said that Ekaterina Geltzer, one of the best Tsar-Maidens, learnt this Russian dance from the famous Sobeshchanskaya, ballerina of the 'seventies. Saint-Léon's original "book" of the ballet travelled from the folk tale by Yershov from which the theme was borrowed. Contemporary critics wrote at the time of the first performance that the choreographer was ignorant of the Russian fairy tale world and Russian dance and that he did not understand the character of Ivan-the-Fool. By producing the ballet, however, Saint-Léon was answering a popular demand. There was a great renaissance of Russian patriotism in the 'sixties, and while *Koniok* was rather a poor effort, it was answering the requirements of the time, as was *La Bayadère*.

Some day *The Hump-Backed Horse* will probably get a new production, but even as it is now it is a delight for children. Balletomanes also get their full money's worth since there are two classical acts—the Mermaids, beautifully danced by the *corps de ballet* and soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre, and the scene at the bottom of the sea (*Royaume sous-marine*) which affords one of the best numbers in classical ballet in the form of the *pas de deux* of the Genie of the Ocean and the two Pearls. The success of this interpolated *pas de trois* depends, however, on the dancer impersonating the Genie of the Ocean. The Moscow version was arranged by Gorski in 1912. The Leningrad version still has one Pearl and therefore, a *pas de deux*. The present rendering of the act by Alexei Yermolayev leaves nothing to be desired. He is manly, his technique is beautiful, but above all he has caught the fantastic fairy-tale qualities of the character he is representing, and that is what counts most.

The story of *Koniok* is rather naïve and has departed considerably from the original Russian fairy-tale, but the new Ivan-the-Fool, A. Popko, and Juri Gerber as the Hump-Backed Horse, are so amusing and humorous that the old ballet has acquired a new charm.

The ballerina role of the Tsar-Maiden calls for a strictly classical ballerina. The part was rendered last season by several dancers, such as the long-limbed Berkassova, to her great advantage, but only Marina Myonova possessed that majestic yet truly Russian grace which should mark the impersonation of the role. No other new ballets were produced at the Bolshoi Theatre in the discussed season, but it was far from accidental that the new production of the Glinka opera *Ruslan and Ludmila* was assigned to Rostislav Zakharov, choreographer. This opera, composed according to the taste of the 'forties, is abundant with aerial flights, transformations, and has two acts almost entirely devoted to dancing. Zakharov was very successful with



YERMOLEYEV WITH TATIANA LAZAREVITCH AND NINA CHOROKHOVA IN "THE HUMP-BACKED HORSE"

the one where Oriental maidens lure Ruslan from the search for his bride Ludmila, stolen by the wicked dwarf Chernomor. In this act Zakharov followed the best classical tradition such as the "Shades" or the second act of *Giselle* and produced some very interesting dances both graceful and varied.

He was not so successful with the *divertissement* of the fourth act "In the gardens of Chernomor". He wanted to improve on the Petipa 1874 choreography but halted half-way. One should remember that in Petipa's days character dances in ballet were limited to mazurkas, czardas and the like. When Glinka introduced the real Georgian dance, the lezhinka, into his opera and Petipa later did the choreography, having been shown some basic Caucasian steps, the audience was thrilled. It was something entirely new and was acclaimed without any criticism. Much of the success was due to the performance of the solo in the lezhinka by Marie Petipa, his daughter, and the great character dancer Bekefi. Marie Petipa was very popular, though, as one of her still living contemporaries told me, "she danced mostly with her eyes and arms".

In our time, with the existence of the Moyseyev Folk Dance Ensemble which has done so much for propaganda of true dances of all the nationalities of the Union, the audience discriminates between a dance styled on the real lezhinka and a watery imitation. The Petipa



"BABY STORK", A NEW SOVIET BALLET PRODUCED BY THE BOLSHOI THEATRE FILIAL WITH CHILDREN OF THE THEATRE SCHOOL. JULIA VOLKOVA, ONE OF THE PUPILS, AS THE BABY STORK AND RAISA STRUCHKOVA AS THE PIONEER LEADER

lezghinka also had nothing in common with the original dance, but had Zakharov left it intact, he would at least have had the excuse of preserving Petipa.

The debut of the Moscow season was that of Raisa Struchkova as Maria in *Fountain of Bakhchiserai*. She was so graceful and poetic, particularly in the first act, one only wishes her expected *Giselle* debut would follow soon.

The picture of the season in the Soviet Union would not be complete without mentioning that many Opera and Ballet theatres in the sixteen republics produced classical ballets, that the Sverdlovsk Opera showed a beautiful ballet *The Stone Flower* (the same subject as the Soviet colour film of the same name), that a first-class ballet company has been formed at the newly built Opera for Stalino, heart of the Don coal basin, that Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, produced *Coppélia* with Galia Tzmailova an Uzbek ballerina (seen at the Prague Youth Festival) in the title role, while at Kiev one could see *Esmeralda* and *Swan Lake* arranged by Fedor Lopukhov as a replica of his Leningrad production, for a company of ninety-two dancers.

International Ballet

For two weeks from February 21st the International Ballet will be at the Wood Green Empire. They will be at the Lewisham Hippodrome for a further two weeks. They then go to Southsea for the week commencing March 21st, to Bournemouth the following week and for two weeks from April 4th will be in Plymouth.

The Frank Sharman action photograph on the cover is of "Cinderella", Act iii, at Covent Garden.

The male dancer pictured with Belinda Wright on Page 22 of the last issue of *BALLET TODAY* is Miro Zloch, not Basil Truro as stated.

FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL 1949

By FRANK JACKSON

NOT the least interesting part of the Folk Dance Festival, which took place at the Royal Albert Hall on January 6th-8th, happened outside that enormous, unfriendly arena.

Before the show, as you stand outside the hall, long lines of buses disgorge quite normal looking men and women who hide guiltily under their coats a floral overland, a gaily coloured skirt or decorated shirt. They say goodbye to their attendant friends and relations, disappear somewhat self-consciously into the Artistes' Entrance to meet the friends and relations again in the gloomy corridors. But now the coats and scarves are off—they appear in all their finery. Unlike the ballet, this is a man's occasion; here, in beribboned shirt, with bells round his knees and flowers in his hat (even though the hat is no more than a very battered trilby) the male dancer comes into his own and, by very virtue of the rarity of this metamorphosis, completely outshines the girls, however brightly dressed they may be. In the canteens and restaurants, the dancers nervously talk over their coming ordeal. But even the inside of the Albert Hall seems less inimical now that friends are waving hectically to each other across its vast expanses, or cheering the dancers as they flock on the platform, ready for the opening.

When at last the house lights fade and the spotlights go up, the dancers rush out to perform a May Day Round and the arena blossoms as the rose. The simple figures of the dance, performed *en masse*, seem as complex and meaningful as the *ensembles* of the most intelligent choreographers. And, attendant on the dancers, are the figures of Jack-in-the-Green, the Man-Woman, the Hobby Horse and the Medicine Man cum Fool—characters whose origins are older than dancing.

Apart from these mass dances, there were items by individuals or by small groups:—the Bacup Coconutters (black faced, black dressed men, whose dance is a strange mixture of quadrille, clog-dance and ancient spring ritual); Scots sword dancing magnificently performed by John Armstrong; teams of dancers from various districts of France, in whose dances may be seen the beginnings of what, when a codified system, became known as ballet; there was a Manx Dirk dance by Billy Cain, a dancer with exhilarating *ballon*; and, to success of the evening, a series of set and solo danced by a troupe of young girls and one even younger boy, from Ireland. The girls were good but the boy was better;

I don't remember having seen a more exact sense of timing anywhere.

Last year's Festival—the first I had attended—ran for one day only. This year's lasted three, evidence of a well-merited success. Yet I must admit to a certain dissatisfaction over the production side of the Festival. Folk dances are often highly repetitive and, even in small doses, need a certain amount of doctoring or arrangement for public performance. The question is, how far should this arrangement go? If it goes too far, the dancing will lose that amateur flavour which makes it so delightful. If it does not go far enough, it tends to become boring for an audience. Lighting can help to a certain extent, as can the proper arrangement of items in the programme so as to give variety. But the problem has certainly not been solved in this year's Festival, though I fancy that, compared with last year, the show was more of a "production". Nor was this change always for the better. The organisers of the Festival would be well advised to hire the services of a sensitive commercial producer who would work in complete co-operation with the Folk Dance Society, so that the best use can be made of technical facilities without destroying the true meaning of the dances.

There is always a danger, when writing about Folk Dance, to make the whole business sound solemn and self-conscious. There is, it is true, a unique feeling of antiquity about these dances; there is complete unity between dancers and audience (most of whom could if need be perform the dances themselves) which is absent in stage ballet; there is the ever-present sense of a living tradition strongly at work. But all this sounds so grim when, in fact, the Festival is, for the most part, tremendous fun (the minor part which is not fun is owing to the repetitiveness I mentioned above).

And, during the interval, as you fight for a coffee, or roam about the dank corridors, you bump into a Bacup coconutter, fearsomely dressed in black, adorned with a gay little skirt, while the charcoal makeup on his face, mixed with sweat, streams down the back of his white neck! Imagine how similar meetings with the Sadler's Wells Ballet in the gallery bar would destroy the illusion built up on the stage. But there is here no illusion to destroy. This dancing is the dancing of everyday reality; it is part of our deepest selves; and, when the Festival is over, the dancers will pack up and go home to their farms and factories—until next year.



Cinderella
Mora Shearer

Robert Helysmann
as an
Ugly Sister



The Prince
Michael Somes



Mora Shearer and
Michael Somes



The Prince and Cinderella
Violetta Elvin & John



Cinderella
Mora Shearer



Frederick Ashton
as an
Ugly Sister

#5

Spring's Page



Spring
dia Neima



Fairy Godmother
Pamela May



Autumn
Pauline Ogden



Autumn's
Page



Summer
Anne Heaton



Winter
Beryl Grey

Winter's
Page



Two Stars

Foster
Alexandres Grant

Two Gentlemen



BALLET AND THE PROVINCES

By KATHRINE SORLEY WALKER

FOR a long time the London ballet audience, in spite of an understandable tendency to regard itself as the British ballet public, has recognised the interest and the work of the provinces. It is aware that ballet clubs exist, that dancers are trained, and that indeed throughout the rest of England there is considerable activity and enthusiasm for ballet; but perhaps it does not realise that this interest of the other areas in the country falls into three phases, which can be easily split up by the labels pre-1939, the war years, and post-1945.

The provinces did not share in the glories of the Diaghilev days, but became acquainted with Russian ballet through the tours of Pavlova and Karsavina. They did not, therefore, learn to judge choreography as did the Diaghilev public, but had their attention concentrated on the individual dancer. It was indeed their enthusiasm for dancing rather than for the choreographic art that led to the establishment and support of several important schools of dancing, and from these emerged some of the soloists who are well-known today. At the same time ballet clubs began to be formed, among these a very flourishing venture, the Liverpool Ballet Club, which contrived to borrow productions from the Vic-Wells Ballet, complete with principals, supplying from its own dancing members the *corps de ballet*.

It was in 1935 that the Vic-Wells Ballet first went on tour and by 1937 they were showing audiences in Cambridge, Glasgow, Newcastle and Leeds a repertoire which included ballets such as *Job*, *Apparitions*, *Checkmate*, *Nocturne* and *Les Patineurs*. *Checkmate*, indeed, had its English première at Newcastle, and the revival of *Pomona* was first given at Cambridge. Moreover, they began to hold auditions in towns visited, with the result that provincial talent was given the chance of being accepted for the Vic-Wells School, and, possibly, the Company—the chance, in fact, of a career, as in the case of Margaret Bolam (now Dale) of Newcastle. This, together with the touring of the Markova-Dolin Ballet and the Ballets Jooss, produced an interest that was healthy if not very widespread; but after 1939 the position began to change.

During the war the provinces became the centre of a constantly moving wheel of touring companies from the best to the worst, the largest to the smallest. At the same time many ballet-goers from London found themselves in the provinces, either through the evacuation, or because they had been called up to the Forces and were stationed in outlying districts; and finding with surprise and joy that ballet, too, was penetrating the "wilds" of England, they encouraged their new acquaintances to have a look at it, with the normal result that for every one ballet-goer who went from London, two

at least would probably patronise ballet in the provinces. There was, too, a subtle change in the attitude of these new provincial recruits to ballet. Because they were introduced by one of those very odd fish—the regular London ballet-goers—they approached ballet differently—as a part of their life, rather than as a twice-yearly evening entertainment. They saw as much of it as they could, they began to demand books, photographs and information, they jealously regarded the capital city which was more constantly supplied with the best, and started taking little trips here, there and everywhere that offered them a chance to see more ballet. This fervent interest became gradually more knowledgeable while not less enthusiastic, largely through the fact that so many areas were able to see the Sadler's Wells Ballet, Fonteyn and Helpmann, and the stimulating and contrasted repertoire with which this Company toured. This was reflected in the local newspaper reviews, which developed in many cases into interesting and thoughtful comment, free from the cross-currents of personal bias which the London public often has to suffer. Ballet became gradually dissociated in the general provincial mind from the dances in musical comedies and revues. Many new clubs were formed, local performances organised, and notable examples of provincial interest were the short-time publication of the Oxford University Ballet Club's "Arabesque" and the organisation of an exhibition in Newcastle.

There was, however, still a large body of casual ballet-goers in the provinces whose taste might be described as more "popular", and this encouraged the formation of companies whose standards were less high, although sometimes more lavish, than those of the Wells. Indeed there was, during the war, an audience for every type of company, and that fact, almost unnoticed while the forefront of the picture was occupied with the growing Wells' provincial public, emerges in the post-1945 scene as a threatening cloud.

With their attainment of Covent Garden, the Sadler's Wells' policy has changed. Provincial touring, which still continued during the summer of 1946, decreased to a short Manchester visit in 1947 and has not been undertaken since then. As a result, the Company's provincial supporters have been deprived of the opportunity of seeing its more recent productions—which include much of Ashton's most mature work; of following the development of its dancers; and of renewing acquaintance with ballets they have previously admired, such as *The Rake's Progress*, *Dante Sonata*, and *Miracle in the Gorbals*. Equally distressing is the fact that their knowledge of the full-length classical



RAISA STRUCHKOVA AND VLADIMIR PREOBRAJENSKY IN THE ORIGINAL SOVIET PRODUCTION OF "CINDERELLA"—AN INTERESTING COMPARISON WITH THE BALLROOM SCENE IN THE SADLER'S WELLS VERSION

works in the Sadler's Wells' repertoire—ballets from which they are constantly seeing excerpts performed by other companies—has naturally become dim with the passing of time.

It is now three years since Sadler's Wells were raised to the Covent Garden stage, and they would now seem to be beyond the reach of any but the most important outside engagements. During that time the provinces have certainly had the opportunity of seeing the work of the Ballet Rambert (although they, too, have been abroad) and the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet. They are widely visited by the International Ballet who, however, tour an extremely limited repertoire.

Consequently, there is a tendency in the provinces at present for the casual, uninformed attitude to ballet to predominate, and to admire the less admirable work. The discerning, of whom there are still a large number, discouraged by the knowledge that unless they come to London they can never see the most important British contributions to Ballet, are half-heartedly supporting the best touring companies and keeping their interest alive by their own efforts through ballet clubs which offer lectures, exhibitions and classes.

What kind of solution could be suggested for this

problem? It cannot, one feels, be realised by the Covent Garden management that it is one of the responsibilities of a company of such pre-eminence as Sadler's Wells to do its share in maintaining standards within Great Britain as well as carrying its influence overseas. Visits to the Continent could surely be arranged in alternate summers, so that the larger provincial cities could be toured once in two years, during the June to November absence of the company from the Opera House. The need for such work is so outstanding that it should be undertaken even if it entailed some modifications, choreographic or otherwise. Sadler's Wells were never, in the past, unadventurous; nor were they slow to adapt their performances or repertoire to varied theatres and conditions when such action was essential to the survival of ballet itself in this country. Now, although ballet may be sufficiently firmly rooted as a result of this policy, it is equally essential that it should again be employed to help the survival of an intelligent interest in ballet among the large audiences outside London. This is emphasised by the fact that visiting companies and dancers go on tour, because it means that provincial audiences remain unable to compare the best that foreign ballet organi-

sations can offer with the best that we ourselves have produced, and may too easily subscribe to the old opinion, gradually dying, that British dancers and choreographers are less able than their overseas rivals.

There is a long way still to go in the education of the ballet audience both in London and in the rest of the United Kingdom; and in this sphere Sadler's Wells,

which has risen by sure stages to general acceptance as our premier Company, has a role of prime importance to play. Apart from other considerations, it should be persuaded to undertake it because, like every theatrical organisation, it is dependent in the long run upon the goodwill and understanding support of its public throughout its own country.

DANILOVA

By PAUL TASSOVIN

LOOKING back over the course of ballet during the last forty years, that institution the Russian Ballet and all it implies would seem to be incomplete without the name of Danilova. The last of the *émigré* Russians to be nurtured in the great traditions of the Maryinsky, and one of the most dynamic forces in the ballet of our time, she personifies the prima ballerina in its full significance—a species that is in ever-growing danger of becoming extinct.

Standards have fallen; a renaissance has been shattered; the immortals have grown dim. In a mercenary age of tawdry subterfuge, relics and fragments of the fading dream are our most dearly loved possessions. Danilova is not the least of these; for though we have Massine, Balanchine, and not a complete dearth of those treasured talents from a past era, we have not another ballerina from the old school.

Of military stock, Alexandra (Shura) Dionisevna Danilova was born in Peterhof, St. Petersburg, during the reign of the last Tsar. Her birthday is given as the 20th of November, but the year of her birth is known only to the passport officials. One might say: "A ballerina is as old as she dances", for though we know that "Shura" was born a few years before the outbreak of the first world war, we know also that she was born young, and that she will never grow old in the eyes of her countless admirers.

The little Shura's life was never easy. Orphaned during very early years she passed by way of a kindly aunt into the Imperial Schools, and by dint of application that was not less than obsessional, gained an acknowledged place of merit in the Maryinsky before the revolution obliterated the remaining magnificent qualities of the old régime.

Probably the hardships of her early years, the shadow of death that robbed her of dear ones, the frugal means of livelihood at that time in the Soviet Union, brought out the intensely human qualities of her character, and left her nothing to strive for but her art. Her whole life would seem to be an object lesson in singleness of purpose; in the pursuance of that beloved art. For her everything was dedicated and devoted to that end. She has always been a tireless and

determined worker; she would never miss a class; and she discovered early that the reward of her labours was success . . . a never ending flood.

The young fledgling of the Maryinsky days was lank and thin, with flowing dark brown hair. She changed when she left Russia to accept for ever the wandering life, and came by way of the music hall to Diaghilev's golden tent. She has always been just in time to catch the auspicious moment, just old enough to acquire by first hand the glorious gifts of those who were passing. She thrived on the cultured life of Europe, she matured, won acclaim, and developed the most beautiful legs to be seen on any dancer.

Today she will be best remembered for her work with the de Basil company. At the height of her powers she won renown during the 'thirties, for such roles as the Can-can Dancer in *La Boutique Fantasque*, as the *Firebird*, as the Street-dancer in *Le Beau Danube*, the Glove-seller in *Gaité Parisienne*. One remembers well her brilliance as Swanilda in *Coppélia*, her nobility in *Swan Lake*, her gauche peasant charm in *Igrouchka*, her great sense of comedy, and her brittle sparking quality in almost every role she undertook. One remembers faults too, an untidy foot, arms that were too hard, but these were minor details that somehow never marred the total effect of her performance.

Of what content one is tempted to ask is the amalgam of her personality, of her magic? What besides the technical skill of a dancer? She is shrewd and tough; yet sensitive and emotional . . . sophisticated and chic; yet naïve, even childlike. Tough through having to fend for herself, the shrewdness grown of grappling with impresarios and the intrigues of which the ballet is never free. She has the generous soul of the Slav; her native inheritance. She has taste and eloquence bred from the wealth of her experience.

The remarkable career of this superlative ballerina may be bracketed into five distinct episodes or eras. They cover a lifetime of ballet. First the Maryinsky period, then the Diaghilev, followed by the de Basil, more recently the American period; and now, what follows . . . Russia never saw the best of her, only the promise; Europe saw her evolution as a ballerina



Isabel
Rosario
Hudson

under Diaghilev, and later as a more mature artist under de Basil. Of the American period we have heard by report of her many triumphs, of the indefatigable Danilova who at the age of forty attempted the role of Giselle for the first time.

She is a troupier, a veteran, an artist in her own right. She has not tried to imitate the famous, but to be herself. She has not tried to become a second Grisi, or a Pavlova, but the one and only Danilova. Such dancers are a breed apart, rare, and incalculable, each having their own characteristics, and their own special aura.

Now on the eve of her re-appearance at Covent

Garden the question being asked by balletomanes both old and young is "What has America done to Danilova?" What may that huge new young public that has grown up during her absence expect to find? How will those ten years in the west have affected her art, her personality, her technique? And what of her Giselle? These are questions which will soon be answered. She comes now, after the long absence, to fill our hearts with fragrant memories, tinged perhaps with a nostalgic sadness for that which has passed and will never come again; and to give to the new young public a taste of the intrinsic essence of "Russian Ballet".

THE ENGLISH DANCER

By ANNABEL FARJEON

IT is dangerous to generalise about national characteristics, for we of the middle class are now such a mix-up, both by heredity and education. But there are certain definite traditions which mould us to a pattern, so that a mannerism of walking or of flirting may reveal both class and nationality. English dancers derive almost always from the middle class, and if they did not do so originally they are soon adjusted to its conventions. They come mostly from among the girls and boys who attend local dancing schools, where a talented performance as a fairy or pixie at the end of term will give evidence of gifts for music and movement; from thence they graduate to the specialised teacher of ballet, and ultimately join a company, so achieving professional status. Such dancers are, generally speaking, a prim and respectable lot, in no way conforming to the nineteenth century idea that the ballet girl was little better than a prostitute. For myself, I often wish that our modern English dancers—both male and female—were less inhibited on the stage, showing some of that romantically voluptuous abandon with which the Victorian imagination invested them. On the stage they appear as solid and nice mannered young people as ever came from the suburbs. All their emotions are in some way muted—they may be gay or sad as required by their parts, but always within the limitation of nice manners.

Now the theatre requires a heightened expression of emotion far beyond this, if the deeper sympathies of its audience are to be touched; and that is where it seems most English dancers fail. They possess beauty and technical skill to a high degree, but their standard of artistic expression is below par. The fact that a social environment has had a somewhat dimming effect on the individual character does not necessarily mean that all personality is killed; it means that a great deal more attention must be paid to the building up of self-confidence. The Englishman is terrified of making a fool of himself, but this is what every theatrical exponent must be willing to do. Compare Mlle. Danilova and Miss Moira Shearer as the Can-can dancer in *La Boutique Fantasque*. Artistic experience and technical ability aside, it is obviously easy for Mlle. Danilova to give full rein to her *joie de vivre*, while it is obviously a great effort for the Scottish beauty.

There is no excuse for this omission in training, since with ballet every chance for the full expression of artistic potentiality is given. The dancer lives in a concentrated and secluded world, his whole attention perforce riveted to the work, since the emotional and physical strength required are such as to leave little or

no energy for superfluous interests. The daily routine of class, rehearsals and performance, with a little social life thrown in late at night, is more than sufficient for the human capacity of assimilation and self-expression, which is so necessary to everyone. Yet in spite of a full life, our dancers remain pathetically self-conscious; they also remain slow to react and develop emotionally. This deficiency once drove Miss de Valois into such an agony of impatience, that she shouted at a dancer, "Wake up, you stupid little Anglo-Saxon!"

But though such exclamations give relief to the exasperated teacher, they do not help the victim to express himself better on the stage. A training of wide artistic appreciation, combined with dramatic classes on the Stanislavsky scale of thoroughness, is required to exploit our dancers' artistic sensibilities more fully. They already possess natural qualities of lyricism and subtlety, interesting and charming in their way, but nothing near that compelling quality by which the finished artist holds his audience. It is as though with body and mind the English dancer would deny that ballet was a sensuous expression. In fact, he is so ruled by his self-consciousness that it may even deter him from practising, for it is generally "not done" to show too much enthusiasm for the work. In the same way public school boys will seldom admit to "swotting", and jeer at the open "swotter" out of their fear and jealousy. There are a number of suchlike complicated affectations and taboos in English ballet companies, which are a serious handicap. It is well that dancers should have openly simple and happy dispositions. The life in itself is hard and frustrating enough without extra complications, for ambition drives the spirit ruthlessly. So few can reach the top, from among the many who spend probably twenty years of their youth trying to get there; for, whether they are the meanest member of the *corps de ballet*, or the ballerina herself, there must be no slackening of effort during this time, since to miss the daily class means an immediate deterioration in the standard of technique.

If I have been almost entirely critical of the English ballet dancer it is not for want of liking or admiration, but because praise for the great advances they have made in the last decade has already been lavish. It is time the standard of their work was re-assessed, and that we realised they have not yet fulfilled their potentialities; for the mentality of a refined and capable high-school girl will not make a ballerina, nor will that of a blasé boy scout give the world a *premier danseur* of any interest.

MARKOVA AND DOLIN AGAIN

THERE were a number of reasons why the five performances at the Empress Stadium, Earls Court, from January 3rd to January 7th might have been a failure of appalling dimensions. To begin with, although it is well known that the English ballet-goer will accept (nay, even applaud) any amount of bad ballet, it is on condition that it shall take place in a *bona fide* theatre with a curtain that will go up and, in due course, come down again, thereby leaving no one in doubt as to its having actually been a performance of ballet. Then again, to the average ballet-goer who can find his way blindfold from any direction to Covent Garden, or indeed to the Prince's Theatre, the Empress Stadium seems almost as remote as the North Pole and, on the first night at any rate, very little warmer. Finally, the conditions of presentation once one had penetrated to the arena (which was quite a feat in itself) might have made the heart of a Spartan tremble and grow faint. That acreage of greensward, those beds of rhododendron

bushes smothered with wired-on paper roses; above all, those rustic benches and bird tables so carefully floodlit in a repulsive shade of ginger. And when we had swallowed all that, there was the music to contend with as it blared out from innumerable loudspeakers with time lags of appreciable seconds so that the effect was of some gargantuan canon which went on for hours. I am fairly certain that the orchestra played very well but so peculiar are the acoustic properties of this stadium that the nearer one sat to the musicians the less one heard, though at least the fugue effect was missing.

No, this was not, could not and can never be Ballet. Yet the fact remains that Markova and Dolin triumphed and that these evenings were full of rewarding moments for an audience which, enormous on the first night, by Friday was threatening to burst the sides even of this arena. Markova and Dolin are used to making this kind of appearance in America and therefore know exactly what will "come over" in a vast space, and they both

ALICIA MÁRKOVA AND ANTON DOLIN IN THE FINALE OF THE "SNOW" SCENE FROM "CASSE NOISSETTE"

Action photograph by Frank Sharman



have powers of projection which elude most dancers today in far smaller surroundings. This was no place for the classical test pieces or for "story ballets", and *divertissements* were necessarily the order of the day. Some chunnings by a scratch and mostly inexperienced *corps de ballet* to Chopin's Ballade in A flat made one realise anew the genius of Fokine's *Les Sylphides*, the mazurka *pas de deux* of which Markova and Dolin danced on some of the evenings.

The second half of each programme was devoted to the Snow Scene and the Sugar Plum Fairy portions of *Casse Noisette*. From the moment she first danced it, Markova has been the Sugar Plum Fairy of our generation and she proved it again for us even though we needed no such reminding. One regrets some of the idiosyncrasies which she has allowed to flaw her technique—the slight stoop of the shoulders, the dropping forward of the body in an *arabesque* without increasing the angle of the raised with the supporting leg so that the line is broken—but she is still unparalleled in *allegro* movements, and her *sissones*, her *petits battements sur le coup de pied devant* and her *emboîtés en tournant* leave one with that sense of supreme satisfaction which comes when watching something perfectly accomplished.

Dolin's style has certainly roughened with the years but to see him taking up and holding an *effacé* position is to understand the meaning of "good school". His partnering needs no commendation at this time, and a slight *contretemps* one evening came almost as a relief, proving that, after all, he is only human and therefore fallible like the rest of us.

Let us be quite clear about these performances. We do not want to trail off to ice rinks and greyhound stadiums in order to see the great artists of our day. We may forget their surroundings while we watch them but it is none the less all wrong. Yet if this should be the



Action photograph by Frank Sharman

ALICIA MARKOVA AND ANTON DOLIN IN THE PAS DE DEUX FROM
"LES SYLPHIDES"

only means of seeing them, why then we must go and be grateful for those snatches of perfume which waft across those vasty reaches and still intoxicate.

P.W.M.

PREOBR AJENSKA TODAY

By MICHAEL CAREY

OBSERVE the weary dancer trudging up the stairs of the "Metro" at Place Clichy, Montmartre, the bustling noisy "Soho" of Paris—what a relief to come out of the hot stale air in the tube to the fresh air, and empty his (or her) lungs of the characteristic mixed smell of Garlic and Gaullois! But this is a very short refreshment since a few steps take one across the road and to the door of Salle Wacker, the large block of studios—a veritable Tower of Babel, giving shelter to a variety of teachers of both dancing and singing and an equally cosmopolitan mixture of students.

In Studio number eight one finds Preobrajenska's class: the door is closed and outside stand several dancers, men and girls, ready for class in their practice clothes and ready for sweat with towels on their shoulders. They stand whispering, listening for the tinny piano inside to play the music for the *grand manège* which finishes the class—there it is! They rush in to take up their position at the bar for the first *pliés* which Preo generally begins as the preceding class finish their final step. Standing at the back of the classroom looking through the moving dancers to the far side

where there is the mirror and piano, it is at first difficult to distinguish Preobrajenska since she dresses in a very unpretentious way for her teaching: there is one infallible method of recognition however—her face. There are very few women who retain any real beauty past their middle age and this is perhaps the test for the kind of beauty which reflects the personality as well as having a superficial attraction. Preobrajenska must have been a very lovely woman when she was young. Her face is extremely mobile and her wide mouth complements the expressiveness of her eyes which have a quick searching quality—her face is never more expressive than when she corrects a stubborn pupil: "Mais non, vous ne faites pas comme ça, c'est comme ça . . . ça—ce n'est pas juste!" Her rather high musical voice speaking French with the unmistakable Russian accent, rolling the *r*'s and slightly sounding the *e* in "comme", adds to the sorrow in her eyes as, shaking her head, she seizes the dancer's offending limb and pushes it into the required position. But Preo is never bad tempered in the ordinary way, there is always an element of great sorrow in her impatience, sorrow at seeing her beloved classical dance so misunderstood. Watching her small slight figure moving up and down the room, guarding every movement made by her pupils with her quick eyes, one realises what a genuine love and understanding this woman must have for the classical dance to have retained such a vital interest after so many years of teaching.

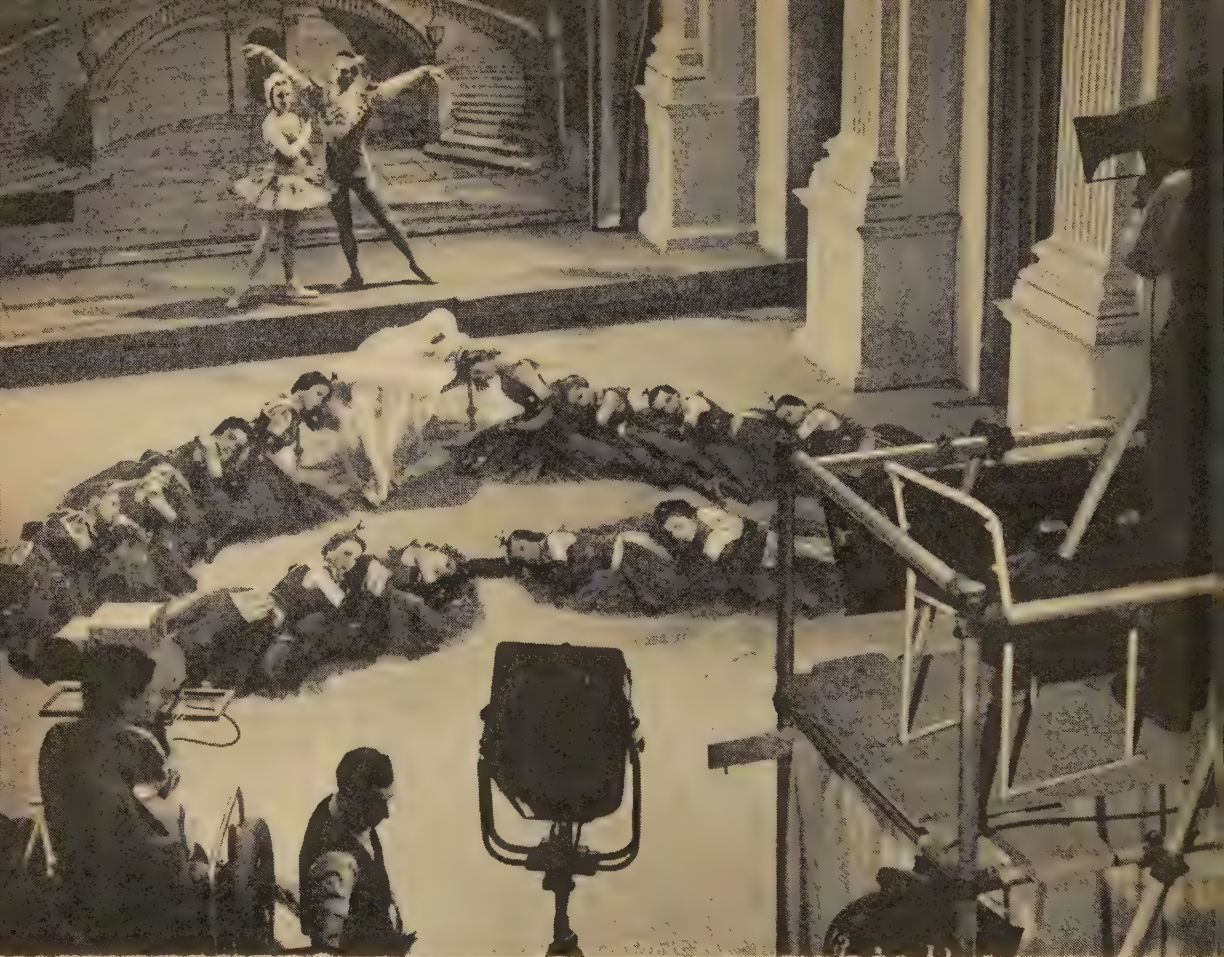
In the classroom she wears an old dress and carpet slippers and it is fascinating to watch her as she demonstrates a step and to see an almost glamorous charm and nobility surrounding, shadow like, this quite shabby little person. Particularly noticeable is the fact that these demonstrations are never mere mechanical analyses as with so many teachers, but that despite the natural physical weakness to be expected at her age, she is nevertheless able to give a complete sketch of the *enchaînement*, as a dance sequence with a shape and flow; one sees then the picture of a younger Preo, the ballerina of the Maryinsky, "Preobrajenska, witty, accomplished, the darling of the audience", a small graceful figure with infinitely expressive arms and unusually liquid wrists and fingers. With regard to this younger Preobrajenska, the dancer, it is interesting to include a quotation from Karsavina's *Theatre Street* which illustrates the qualities of energy and intelligence so predominant in her character: "Her road to success had been a hard one. She had begun as a *corps de ballet* dancer and gradually worked her way to the top. Her virtuosity she owed to Cecchetti, her master, and perhaps even more to her own undaunted courage. Cecchetti was busy at the school the whole morning, she daily at rehearsal and nightly at the theatre, taking part not only in every ballet, but almost in every opera where there were dances. The performance over, she went

to take her lesson with the Maestro; it lasted far into the night. Artists respected her greatly for her perseverance and loved her gentle ways. Her ultimate success was greeted with enthusiasm by all."

There was an almost legendary atmosphere growing round the name of Preobrajenska in the English ballet world until a short time after the war: "was", because it has nearly disappeared now. Until 1939 Paris was the centre of the ballet world, the large Russian companies always rehearsed there or in Monte Carlo and they represented the main stream of ballet; consequently the famous Russian *émigré* teachers—Kschessinskaya, Volinine, Egorova, and Preobrajenska, all had their studios in the French capital and one found working in them students from all over the world. These teachers still keep their fame but are much less sought after—why? During the recent war English and American ballet "grew up". In some spheres it did not pass its adolescence but this did not alter the fact that it achieved an economic stability equal if not superior to the pre-war "Russian" companies and this meant that balletic activity was no longer centred in Paris but was equalled in London and New York. Hence a student of ballet no longer goes as a matter of course to Paris just as a singer to Milan, but instead can find a good teacher nearer to his or her home.

Now whilst it is an admirable thing that more good ballet teachers should be available in the different capitals thus raising the international standards of ballet technique, it should nevertheless be recognised that such teachers as Preobrajenska are the last representatives of a dying tradition of classical teaching which we must admit, whether we like it or not, has produced in France today a stronger generation of dancers than we have in England. I say "stronger" meaning stronger technically, and one has only to look at the best ballets of Roland Petit to see the advantages involved.

When Paris was liberated from the German occupation and it was heard in England that Preo was still alive there was great eagerness amongst the younger dancers to work under this great teacher who had produced such artists as Baronova and Toumanova. They fondly imagined that after a few weeks in her studio they would become prodigious technicians—they expected a wizard with a magic wand, one touch of which would make them turn ten *pirouettes* and balance *sur les pointes* for an eternity. Disenchantment was bound to come. Those who were able to visit Paris were anxiously questioned when they returned and their less fortunate friends received the backwash of personal disappointment: "she is very sweet but getting too old to teach, the Parisian classes are terribly lacking in discipline—people seem to please themselves whether they work or not, Preo does not bother to give correction and her class varies little from day to day". These dancers did not see that Preobrajenska is not a mere



B.B.C. photograph

THE PARIS OPERA BALLET TELEVISED IN LIFAR'S "NOUVEL DIVERTISSEMENT". YVETTE CHAUVIRE (WITH VEIL) AS PRINCESS AURORA, AND MICHEL RENAULT AND CHRISTIANNE VAUSSARD AS THE BLUE BIRD AND PRINCESS FLORINE

acrobatic advisor, a walking encyclopædia of hints for technical improvement. She is an artist in teaching—a painter of painters, one whose teaching surpasses the mere imparting of skill and who understands that style and technique are inseparably bound together in dancing.

The casual visitor to her class will inevitably find it unsatisfactory unless he or she looks for more than the temporary satisfaction of exhaustion—the feeling of having had their money's worth. Preo has a very definite system of teaching which derives equally from the precision and clean style of Cecchetti, and the rather more *dansante* Russian school with its more fluid and lyrical use of the head and arms; this system can only be appreciated by close study over a period and the student will then see the value of Preobrajenska's comparatively short class in which there is a perpetual emphasis on the importance of style in

classical movement and a constant attention to the subtleties of the classical line.

Preobrajenska had the reputation of being an exceptionally intelligent dancer in her day and it is with this intelligence that she teaches—her class is short but intense and the accent is always on economy and good taste in style—it is only by intelligent discrimination that the dancer can extract the utmost value from each movement and by attention to such details as the control of breathing and expenditure of energy on each step. Such is the basis of her system plus the qualities of love and enthusiasm which transform her from a mere teacher to a great artist in teaching.

FRENCH BALLETS ON TELEVISION—I

By LISA GORDON SMITH

HAVING been slightly allergic to television for many years, it was in no very excited frame of mind that I went to see the first of the series of French ballet programmes from Alexandra Palace on December 20th, but I did become excited as I saw the beginning of a possible new art form unfolding on the screen.

We have had ballet televised on several occasions, with varying degrees of success, but this was "television ballet", a very different matter, which showed that, if co-operation and understanding continue to grow between choreographer and producer, we may have, eventually, a fused and composite art which may as well be given the inevitable name of "teleballet" now, as later.

Of this present series, the first two programmes were of sufficient interest, both as ballet and as television, to augur well for those to come. The Ballet de l'Opéra appeared to be an ill-disciplined company of well-disciplined dancers who, in contrast to the lack of precision shown by French dancers in London recently, danced, as individuals, extremely well. From Yvette Chauviré, of course, a fine quality of performance is expected and her high standard was maintained that evening. Lycette Darsonval lacked little except balance, but Christianne Vaussard, good dancer though she is, seemed unable to project her personality on to the television screen. Max Bozzoni and Alexandre Kalioujny also danced well, the former's partnering being quite outstandingly good.

The lack of cohesion in the *ensembles* was probably due to the dancers working in an unaccustomed medium, which also accounted for one or two unexpected disappearances off the screen. In the excitement of the performance, it is not surprising that they occasionally overstepped the somewhat restricted "invisible barrier" laid down at the rehearsal; but it was surprising to see, in the male *pas de quatre*, the same old ragged line we have barely learned to tolerate from the Fairies' Cavaliers in our own *Sleeping Beauty*!

The ballets shown on December 20th were not quite so new to London as the preliminary announcements suggested. *Suite en Blanc* was the "blanc" part of Serge Lifar's *Noir et Blanc* which was performed at Covent Garden last summer, and *Nouvel Divertissement* was the same choreographer's version of the last act of the *Sleeping Princess*. This, although it had nothing to commend it balletically over other versions, did point the way to possible future achievements if special choreography were used for television rather than even the best of adaptations.

Philip Bate, the producer of this series of programmes, has a deep sense of responsibility to the choreographer, for which all ballet-lovers must be grateful; and, rather than spoil a choreographer's pattern or a dancer's line, will use long shots to obtain a complete picture. This, to get an *ensemble* originally intended for a large stage on to a small television screen, frequently means a very long shot indeed, with results which are sometimes disappointing to the viewer, but it is far less worrying to the eye than seeing the dancer chased with "panning" shots, and must serve until specially designed ballets are available.

The most disconcerting of all the aspects of "adapted" ballet is the silence at the "applause points" which occur, almost automatically, in any ballet constructed on classical lines and in which the dancing predominates over the story, if any. These pauses, useful in the theatre, have no place in television, and an adaptation has not gone nearly far enough if they are allowed to remain, as they did in Serge Lifar's two ballets on that occasion.

The second programme, on January 3rd, was in some ways even more interesting, showing two ballets of which much has been heard, although they had not previously been danced in England. It was impossible, without having seen the stage versions, to judge how far they were adapted; certainly the themes and the arrangements as shown were extremely suitable for television and equally so for the stage. Roland Petit is a progressive and experimental artist and must, therefore, make occasional mistakes, but these two ballets alone would be sufficient to show that he is a good choreographer and may well become a great one.

Adame Miroir, with its long hall of mirrors whose narrowness kept the dancers in range and at the same time created an atmosphere of bleak mystery, has a cast of only three dancers, therefore they are clear to the viewer and the pattern is never lost. Each mirror reflects a different aspect of the Young Man's personality, the last one being so strong that it takes on an identity of its own, leaves the mirror and eventually kills him, and although the final sequence is rather too protracted, especially in so small a space, this is a fine ballet, which I, for one, look forward to seeing again. What could have been done with this theme on television had time, circumstances and the combined work of choreographer and producer made it possible, is a fascinating subject for speculation. What was done with it was indeed worth seeing as it stood.

Three classical *divertissements* followed, danced by

Nina Vyroubova and Roland Petit, Renée Jeanmaire (greatly improved since her appearances at Covent Garden in the summer of 1947) with Wladimir Skouratoff, and Serge Perrault partnering Collette Marchand in the *pas de deux* from *Lac des Cygnes* Act II, in which Marchand's dancing was disappointingly marred by jerky knees, but she made up for this by dancing extraordinarily well in the final ballet, *Demoiselles de la Nuit*, in which she was Agathe, the White Cat—the role created by Margot Fonteyn during her guest appearance at this company's inauguration.

Here is another ballet entirely suitable for television. The choreography is brilliant and the dancing was

exceedingly good. The patterns very well preserved and the story clearly told and most gripping. More could have been made of the Rooftop scene which could have been terrifyingly beautiful, and the death episode was not quite clear. I thought the Young Man was "a(n) unconscionable time a-dying" until the ballet was over, and I found that he had done it, all unbeknownst to me.

These first two programmes are, at the lowest estimate, enough to whet my appetite for those to follow, during which I confidently expect to see even further developments in this, the newest aspect of ballet.



THE HYPOCRITES

A Cautionary Fable

By JOAN HYDE

HE liked a bit of jive or swing,
A brass band, all that kind of thing.
He watched the Rovers every week,
Or else ice-hockey, for a break—
The place to go for thrills and laughs.
(He had two fellows' autographs).
He'd liked the panto, as a kid:
Went to the flicks, when others did,
To fool around and call out "Soppy!"
At anything they thought was sloppy.
One rash p.m.—the match was scratched—
An aunt who found him unattached
Had dragged him off to see *Coppélia*.
It wasn't quite a total failure.
Some of the music sounded good.
That dance where she was made of wood—
It's not as thrilling as the rink,
But all the same, it makes you think.
Those front-line fillies had some pep.
(One of the chaps was out of step).
Amazing how he didn't drop her—

She would have gone a nasty cropper.
You see why people make a fuss—
(That girl was really marvellous).

SHE liked that shop in the Arcade
Where little statues were displayed,
And picture-postcards framed in blue
With lovely poems on them, too.
When she had saved up, now and then
She'd buy a pair of goblin men,
Or squander all the precious pile
On nymphs and bunnies—modern style.
Of course she knew about Pavlova,
(Rhyming so prettily with "clover").
One of her friends, a high-strung type
Did Fancy Dancing with Miss Truypé.
She liked *good* music, not that swing!—
Ketelbey and that sort of thing.
One Saturday she thought she'd try
And go to *Madame Butterfly*,

But booking in a careless way
Got tickets for the *matinée*.
The funny thing was, looking back,
It didn't matter. It was *Lac*.

A few weeks passed, our friends become
Regulars in the famous scrum
Outside the gallery—before—
And afterwards outside Stage-Door.
Domestic problems soon arise.
Two more unhappy families
Confront innumerable square yards
Of chronic programmes and postcards;
And every night, pressed rib to rib,
The culprits share their woes *ad lib.*,
With many a haunting, secret sigh.
She made him join the Library.
"They've got some lovely new ones in!"
"Don't care for that, it's far too thin,
And too much reading—haven't time."
"But this one's photos are sublime!
Look twenty-nine—O that's a shame!—
There's sixteen missing." "All the same
Here's two still left of—What say? Pooh!
They'd never notice such a few
With all that lot already gone."
"You *haven't*! O you *are* a one!"

At length some news arrived. "You know
The people in that foreign show?
They do *Giselle*!" "Coo, what a swiz!
It couldn't be the same as this.
I can't imagine *anyone*—"
"We might go some day, though, for fun."
Her birthday came, and so they went.
The costumes were quite different!
"I didn't like that orange dress,
And all those daisies looked a mess.
The little page was rather sweet."
"I liked the way she did her feet."
"Ever so graceful." "Yes, but still—
She didn't make me really THRILL!"
"Of course it seemed *so* different—"
"I thought his legs were rather bent."
"I didn't like the way he stood!
Still, I suppose they were quite good."

And then, one real red-letter night,
A Nice Old Codger saw their plight,
Noted the precious zeal of Youth
And, kindled in his search for Truth,
Ensconced them both beneath his wing.
(Of course, he talked like anything).
A real old gentleman he was,
He even took them to a *classe*.
Of course, with anybody fresh
One has to make the right impressh.

They *read* books now with all their might,
Attended lectures every night
And joined discussion groups, until
With reckless ease they could at will
Fling subtle phrases in the air
Like: "*à la seconde derrière*"
He took, as his especial task,
The history of the English Masque,
While she collected ancient prints
Of dancers—even those with squints.
Above their dreams, all strange and hard,
They built a wonderful façade;
Yet somewhere in those sacred parts,
The bottoms of their secret hearts,
They still thought Blank looked awfully sweet
And Asterisk had funny feet.

They moved in different circles now.
(Old Codger was impressed somehow).
Far overhead the talk flowed on,
But what they could they pounced upon
And gobbled every precious drop,
(To be retailed again, non-stop).
They knew by heart the various "trends",
The names of Fanny Elssler's friends;
Knew when to murmur, at a party,
The words; "*Commedia dell' Arte*".
NEVER mixed the Sacred Corn Dance
Up with the Abbot's Bromley Horn Dance;
Nor failed to mention, now and then,
Kschessinskaya and Preobrajen.
He started writing. She began
Designing costumes. Wife and man,
They persevered. His work was seen
First in their own Club Magazine,
While her ideas were chosen for
The Club's performances galore.
Thus they began their arduous climb
To soporific heights sublime,
Discerning servants of the Arts!
Yet, at the bottoms of their hearts—

A shameless history of vice!
From such obscene absurdities
May the Allhighbrow Gods defend!
How does this shocking story end?
My gentle readers, you know best.
Perhaps you have already guessed.
In well-bred columns, treasured tomes,
Respected in a million homes,
Week after week and year by year,
His shrewd, distinguished lines appear;
While she, amid the West End whirl,
Is known as: "that amusing girl
Whose *chic* décors are all the rage
Upon the Neo-Static stage".

Shall gorges rise? Should lips grow pale
 At this most wicked fairy-tale?
 Have tender ears turned cold and hot
 Listening to such unlikely rot?
 Be calm, my doves! The drop shall fall
 On most fortuitous of all.
 The Epilogue, which looms in view,
 Will prove this story can't be true.

Epilogue

Since inward Conscience never pricked
 At Knowing What They Really Liked,
 And since they strove with hearts well-warmed
 To emulate the Well-informed,
 In this sad world their fruits were fair,
 They prospered and, at last most rare,
 Produced a crop of splendid sons,
 Intelligent and hearty ones,
 Who now, all seven, at the *barre*
 Do credit to their wise mama;
 Diligent in Deceit, and free
 And happy as they well might be,
 Instilled at the Parental Knee
 With Virtuous Hypocrisie.

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BALLET ANNUAL. Edited by Arnold L. Haskell.
 (A. & C. Black, Ltd., 21s. net.)

Ballet Annual goes from strength to strength and this, the third issue, is easily the best up to now. In addition to the survey of a year's events not only in this country but also in Paris and America, there are a number of articles of more than passing interest. Michael Ayrton writes of André Derain as a designer for ballet, and what a pleasure it is to be reminded of Balanchine's *La Concurrence* always over-shadowed, as it was, by his greater *Cotillon* which so closely followed, and of Lifar's *Salade* for the Paris Opera, ever to be remembered for what it looked like rather than for what actually happened in it. Cyril W. Beaumont's essay on Markova and Dolin at Covent Garden brings back the exquisite pleasure of that visit, and Richard Buckle recalls those precious, fleeting moments which, different for all of us though they may be, are in the final analysis what takes us to the ballet again and again. Irène Lidova writes of four French dancers of the day, Babilée, Petit, Charrat and Jeanmaire. Her article is left in its original French, but that need not worry you—you will not require a dictionary. The difference between the Gallic and the Anglo-Saxon approach to the individual dancer, as exemplified in this article, would in itself make a fascinating essay on criticism.

The whole book is extremely well illustrated with photographs and drawings.

P.W.M.

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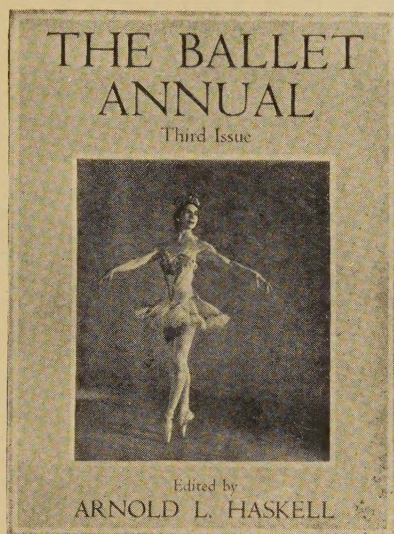
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BALLET RENAISSANCE. By Audrey Williamson.
 (Golden Galley Press Ltd., 15s. net.)

Superficially the appearance of this book is deceptive, no more it would seem than a collection of past reviews interspersed with one or two generalisations on the nature of ballet and academic dancing. But a closer reading reveals a more subtle intention on the part of its author. For the book (as a glance at the index will substantiate) is in reality a mighty anthem raised to the greater glory of Mr. Robert Helpmann. So much so that one is tempted to sympathise with the victim who is dragged willy-nilly from first page to last like some image in an Italian fête, until he is finally replaced in his niche between Irving and Nijinsky. Even the technique of this admittedly fine artist appears exemplary to the author, who assures us that its occasional non-appearance is the *nonpareil* of active subordination to æsthetic principles. Miss Williamson would be a little more convincing, however, if her knowledge of technique corresponded with the accepted authorities. She finds little to commend, for instance, in those whose *cabrioles* are "beaten on the calves or ankles instead of the feet" and says this, or something very like it, not once but three times in the course of the book. Mme. Vaganova and M. Idzikowski will doubtless revise their textbooks accordingly. Yes, this is altogether an astonishing work of its kind.

A.S.

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